



July 19, 2023

Katy Fulton
Cowichan Area Supervisor
BC Parks, West Coast Region,
2930 Trans Canada Hwy.,
Victoria, BC,
Tel: (236) 478-3833,
katy.Fulton@gov.bc.ca

Dear Ms. Fulton,

The Dean Park Estates Community Association (DPECA) Executive is engaged with our residents and other community groups to address the urgent need to reduce the wildfire risk in ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Park.

The Problem:

As you are aware, BC Parks did engage in some “fuel-reduction” activities in the park last winter/spring. However, this work was never completed and many of the debris piles were never disposed of or burned. Further, many dead or hazard trees which had been identified for removal or trimming were marked but never dealt with at the time. Other dead “ladder trees” or hazard trees which should have been removed based on the criteria for the stated work plan, were not dealt with or removed.

“Treatment will include the pruning and removal of ladder fuels - lower tree branches and smaller trees that could allow a fire to spread to treetops, reducing surface fuel load, and removing some trees identified as a hazard to the crews undertaking the treatment.” (See attachment 1.)

The Evidence:

In our efforts to evaluate the seriousness of this issue after complaints from several of our residents, members of our Executive visited the homes of Dean Park Estates residents on Cathedral Place and Carmanah Terrace. We personally inspected the area behind several homes on those streets and photographed the debris piles and other hazards. We had hoped that some of the debris piles had merely been overlooked by the clean-up team. However, we also contacted residents on the other streets which border ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Park. Then it became clear that **every home** which we visited that shared a boundary with the park had similar debris piles and hazards. It now appears that all 38 residences on the west side of Cathedral Place, Echo Place West, Minstrel Place and Carmanah Terrace are adversely

affected. We also photographed properties in those areas. These pictures are attached in Appendix 2.

Most of the residences along the park boundary have done their best to implement FireSmart principles on their own land. However, these efforts would be fruitless if a fire began in the park so close to their boundary. Photos in Appendix 2 show these efforts.

An email from John Trelford, Chief of the North Saanich Fire Department on July 7, 2023, stated that he was aware of the debris piles bordering on Dean Park Estates residences and that the fuel reduction work in the park had not been completed as planned. This email also has attached emails from others involved (including BC Parks staff) **acknowledging their awareness of the situation.** (see Appendix 3)

DPECA and our residents have already written to BC Parks and left phone messages several times over the last few months. However, we have not had any reply or seen any other action. In our efforts to increase community awareness of the situation and to get some attention to this matter, we have already consulted with the following:

- John Trelford, Director of Emergency Services, North Saanich Fire Department,
- Mayor and Council Members, District of North Saanich,
- North Saanich Wildfire Prevention Committee,
- North Saanich Residents Association,
- Pauquachin First Nations Administrator,
- Friends of John Dean Park, and
- Residents of Dean Park Estates.

The PROPOSAL for Immediate Action:

Given that North Saanich is already rated as an EXTREME Fire Risk, that the entire island is rated as Drought Level 4, and that there have already been a record number of wildfires in BC this year, we feel that it is imperative that the fire risk in LAU, WELNEW/John Dean Park. should be dealt with ***before*** the situation worsens.

Because the work on this project was never completed and was still underway in March 2023, it is now too late to use burning to remove the accumulated debris. Our current proposal is that the ***debris be removed from the area, mulched and hauled away as soon as possible.*** It would be negligent to leave it in place and “hope” that nothing happens this summer or this fall until it can be burned in winter 2023. It would only take one careless cigarette, one lightning strike, or one person with bad intentions to turn the park and the surrounding area into a disaster.

This debris removal can be achieved in two ways:

1. The debris can be dragged from the adjoining land through the back yards of each of the 38 residences bordering the park, around the homes, and down the driveways onto the streets. It could then be mulched and hauled away in trucks to the local green waste area.
2. Another option would be to drag the debris onto the Barrett Montfort Trail within the park and then use an ATV with a trailer to haul the debris back to the area near the park gate on

Dean Park Road. From there it could be mulched, loaded onto trucks and hauled away. In most cases this would require less labour, less time and lower costs since the distance to the trail is shorter than the distance through the residents' yards and to the streets. Since this option would be completed wholly within the park, there would be no need to get permission to operate on residents private property. (See Appendix 4 and Appendix 5.)

We do understand that there will be a cost to BC Parks for completing this work. However, the cost of doing ***nothing*** would be much greater. LAU, WELNEW/John Dean Park is a treasure to all those in our community. Even a small fire could damage the irreplaceable sacred sites in the park and one of the last stands of old-growth Douglas-fir and Garry oak on the Saanich Peninsula. If the fire spreads to adjoining properties, it could impact all those who are neighbours of the park including: the Pauquachin First Nation, the farms and properties on the west side of the park as well as the residences in Dean Park Estates. Such a fire could also result in multi-million dollar property damages and potential injuries to all these residents. Since the Fire Departments in the area have limited resources, they would be forced to focus on evacuating residents from the area rather than fighting the fire. Evacuating more than 800 homes in the area would be a massive undertaking - especially when many residents are elderly.

Proposal for Annual Fuel Reduction:

In addition to the immediate action needed that is outlined above, BC Parks should commit to annual fuel-reduction efforts with work beginning every November and with removal or burning completed by February each year. A *Globe and Mail* news article from July 13, 2023 by a wildfire ecologist at UBC emphasizes the importance of this approach. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/amp/opinion/article-canadas-wildfire-approach-needs-to-shift-from-reactive-to-proactive/>

Conclusion:

We sincerely hope that we can work collaboratively with BC Parks and others to address this urgent situation. We look forward to your prompt reply by email or letter. If we do not hear back within 10 days with a commitment to some action, we feel we have a responsibility to notify other residents of North Saanich and Saanich via the local media about this serious and dangerous situation. Of course, we would much prefer that your group immediately follow one of our two removal suggestions. When the work is completed, we would be happy to post in our newsletter, on our website and to other media about the helpfulness and proactive actions of BC Parks in reducing this serious fire threat to our community.

Respectfully,

Marsha Conley, DPECA Vice-President and Trevor Stephenson, Chair of Fire Safety

on behalf of the
Dean Park Estates Executive Committee
P.O. Box 52021, Sidney, B.C. V8L5V9
execom@dpeca.ca

Copies of this letter and the appendices will be sent to the following:

- Christine Rikley, South Island Section Head, BC Parks, Christine.Rikley@gov.bc.ca
- Honourable George Heyman, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, ENV.minister@gov.bc.ca
- Kevin Jardine, Deputy Minister, DM.ENV@gov.bc.ca
- Adam Olsen, MLA for Saanich North and the Islands, adam.Olsen.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- John Trelford, Director of Emergency Services, North Saanich Fire Department, JTrelford@northsaanich.ca
- Mayor and Council, District of North Saanich, corporateservices@northsaanich.ca
- Stephanie Munro, A/Chief Administrative Officer, District of North Saanich, stmunro@northsaanich.ca
- North Saanich Wildfire Prevention Committee, Steve Grossnickle, sgrossnickle@shaw.ca
- North Saanich Residents Association, care of Gordon Hardwick, broadview@mac.com
- Pauquachin First Nations Administrator, Samuel Saunders, reception@pauquachin.com

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Letter from BC Parks to Residents of Dean Park Estates from Christine Rikley, South Island Section Head, BC Parks entitled “*Wildfire Risk Reduction - Notice of Fuel Treatment in ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Park*”. Dated November, 2022

Appendix 2: Photos of debris piles and hazard trees taken from residences whose property adjoins ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Park. Taken on June 27 - July 3, 2023. (If higher resolution photos are needed, please contact Marsha Conley, webmaster of DPECA, webmaster@dpeca.ca)

Appendix 3: Email from John Trelford, Director of Emergency Services, North Saanich Fire Department, 986 Wain Rd I North Saanich, BC V8L 5N8, 250.656.1931. (with attachments from: Mitch Melanson, Wildfire Technician, Cobble Hill Fire Base and Katy Fulton - Cowichan Area Supervisor, BC Parks, West Coast Region)

Appendix 4: Map of ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Park, showing hiking trails and neighbouring properties

Appendix 5: Map of Dean Park Estates, showing streets and residences that border ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Park including Cathedral Place, Echo Place West, Minstrel Place, Carmanah Terrace



Wildfire Risk Reduction – Notice of Fuel Treatment in ŁÁU,WELNEW / John Dean Provincial Park

Dates: November 2022

Pile burning may occur later depending on burn windows

Agency Responsible: Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy – BC Parks

BC Parks plans to continue implementing a fuel management prescription at ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Provincial Park this November 2022.

In 2011, 2016 and 2018, BC Parks engaged registered professional foresters from the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) to conduct wildfire threat assessments of key interface zones in ŁÁU,WELNEW/John Dean Provincial Park and undertook the fuel management recommendations of those professionals around key infrastructure at the mountain summit. In 2019/20, BC Parks reengaged a professional firm to conduct a more targeted threat assessment of the forested area close to the eastern boundary of the park and the park's evacuation route (road and parking lot). As part of that work, a fuel management prescription was drafted to address the areas at increased risk of wildfire. This fuel treatment prescription was implemented in 2020/21 along the eastern boundary of the park.

BC Parks is now notifying you as a neighbour of the park of its plans to continue implementing that fuel management prescription this November 2022. BC Parks in partnership with the BC Wildfire Service will remove accumulations of flammable material ("fuel") in identified, targeted areas close to private residences, and the road/parking area within the park (see attached map for more detail). Removing this excess fuel will reduce the severity and spread of a wildfire from the park to neighbouring properties and vice versa, and it will help reduce the risk of fire spreading from the ground to the tops of trees. This work will also make it easier and safer for firefighters to respond in the event of a wildfire to protect nearby homes. Lastly, this fuel treatment will enhance the resilience of the park's old growth ecosystems by reducing fire threat.

The treatment will cover approximately 7.8 hectares in two distinct areas of the park: the eastern boundary (5.3ha) and the roadway (2.5ha). Treatment will include the pruning and removal of ladder fuels – lower tree branches and smaller trees that could allow a fire to spread to treetops, reducing surface fuel load, and removing some trees identified as a hazard to the crews undertaking the treatment.

To address possible impacts to conservation values of the park, BC Parks commissioned a professional ecological assessment of the proposed treatment area and will be undertaking all mitigation measures recommended in that assessment. For example, to mitigate negative impacts to sensitive plant and animal species, the treatments have been timed for the time of year that will have the least impact on those species and no heavy machinery will be used within forested areas; all treatments will be completed by hand.

Work is estimated to begin October 31st, 2022. Although specific dates are subject to weather and crew availability, generally work will occur Monday to Friday between 9:00am and 4:00pm. Crews will be working in targeted areas along

Appendix 1: Copy of Letter to DPE residents on Wildfire Risk Reduction - Notice of Fuel Treatment in LÁU,WELÑEW/John Dean Park - November 2022 - page 2

the eastern boundary of the park, sometimes within sight of the homes along the park boundary. Residents near the park will likely hear noise (e.g. chainsaws) from crews during the course of their work. Smoke from controlled burn piles may be observed – please note all burning will be conducted and monitored by qualified BCWS professionals. Pile burning may occur after November depending on wind and weather windows.

Due to the limbing of some trees and other work, including pile burning, periodic and temporary trail closures will be needed for the safety of park users. BC Parks and BCWS staff will be posting notification signs at trailheads. Continuous passage on some trails may be blocked. The LÁU,WELÑEW / John Dean Provincial Park webpage will be updated weekly with trail closure information.

Please see the map on the following page with wildfire fuel treatment areas symbolized in green.

BC Parks thanks the BC Wildfire Service for their support on this fuel treatment project.

BC Parks Contact:

Christine Rikley, South Island Section Head, BC Parks

Christine.Rikley@gov.bc.ca

Park website: https://bcparks.ca/explore/parkpgs/john_dean/

Appendix 2: Photos of Dean Park Estates homes bordering John Dean Park:

Behind Cathedral Place - first photo shows proximity of debris to residence property



Behind Carmanah Terrace - showing ladder trees and tagged trees proximity to residence property line. Third photo shows property boundary cleared for Firesmart on park boundary.



Appendix 2 - page 2: Photos behind Echo Place showing large piles and debris piled between two trees



Photos from behind Minstrel Place showing proximity to road into Park and large pile



Appendix 3: Email from John Trelford, Fire Chief, North Saanich and attachments



John Trelford

re: Fire Hazard in LAU, WELNEW/John Dean Park

To: webmaster@dpeca.ca

Inbox - iCloud July 7, 2023 at 7:15 AM



Good afternoon Marsha, I'm glad you have noticed the efforts BC Parks has given to John Dean Park. As you can see in the correspondence below the project is ongoing and they will continue to burn debris in the Fall 2023. Projects of this size take a great deal of time to complete due to terrain and weather but also a small window of time each year that they are able to burn to ensure it is not a nuisance to surround residential properties in the area. I am aware of the piles that have not yet been dealt with and with speaking to crews in the area while performing the work they are not considered a threat to wildfire. John Dean Park as well as others in our area that are Federal or fall under the CRD are not within our jurisdiction therefore the District does not conduct wildfire mitigation for those areas.

I hope this is helpful.

Regards

John

John Trelford | *Director of Emergency Services*
North Saanich Fire Department | 986 Wain Rd | North Saanich, BC V8L 5N8 | 250.656.1931



Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Melanson, Mitch FOR:EX <Mitch.Melanson@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 11:36 AM
To: Fulton, Katy ENV:EX <Katy.Fulton@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: John Dean

Hi Katy,

I got a call from North Saanich Fire Department looking for an update on the John Dean project.

I passed along our last update that I had and the progress we made in 2022.

If you could steer me in the right direction on who to contact about any other updates from when we were on site that would be much appreciated!

Thanks,



Mitch Melanson
Wildfire Technician
Cobble Hill Fire Base
South Island BC Wildfire Service
Coastal Fire Centre
Phone: (250) 927-4558

REPORT WILDFIRES: 1-800-663-5555 or *5555

Appendix 3: page 2 - Trelford email and attachments - continued

Hello,

Here is the update I got from the parks supervisor Katy.

I added her email in this thread if you had anymore questions for her.

Cheers,



Mitch Melanson
Wildfire Technician
Cobble Hill Fire Base
South Island I BC Wildfire Service
Coastal Fire Centre
Phone: (250) 927-4558

REPORT WILDFIRES: 1-800-663-5555 or *5555

From: Fulton, Katy ENV:EX <Katy.Fulton@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 12:33 PM
To: Melanson, Mitch FOR:EX <Mitch.Melanson@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: John Dean

Hi Mitch,

Your team was on site last year to burn a bunch of piles but since it was such a busy season not all of the piles were finished. We had a contractor in doing some thinning and piling and they didn't get the chance to burn (short window) we are aiming to hire someone in the fall to burn the piles that are on site.

Please reach out if you would like more details.

Cheers,

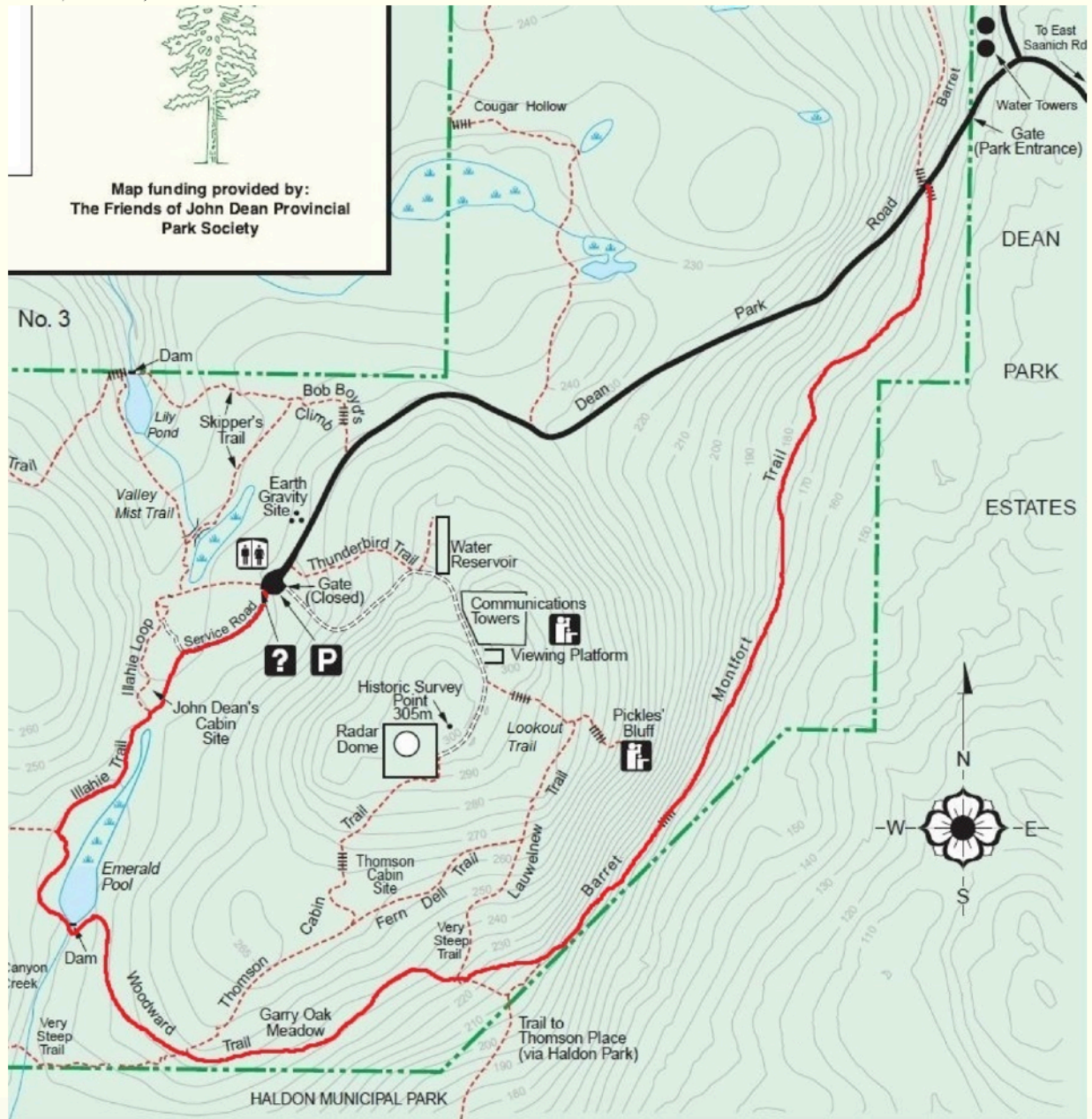


Katy Fulton
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Web: www.bcparks.ca
[Get your BC Parks License plate today](#)

Appendix 4: Map of Barrett Montfort Trail in LAU, WELNEW/John Dean Park

Map 8: Barret Montfort & Woodward

Medium, 60 minutes, [Photos](#)



Next Map

Appendix 5:

Dean Park Estates residences that border the park are:

South of Dean Park Road and the gate into John Dean Park are on Cathedral Place, Echo Place West, Minstrel Place. Residences bordering the park North of Dean Park Road and the gate into John Dean Park are on Carmanah Terrace.

